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Santa Ana College

Regular Effective Contact Policy

Regulations:

Title 5 and the Distance Education Guidelines for the California Community Colleges state:

§55200. Definition and Application.

Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. All distance education is subject to the general requirements of this chapter as well as the specific requirements of this article. In addition, instruction provided as distance education is subject to the requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. §12100 et seq.) and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, (29 U.S.C. §794d).

NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code.

Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code; Title 29 United States Code Section 794d, and Title 42 United States Code Section 12100 et seq.

§55202. Course Quality Standards.

The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a course conducted through distance education as are applied to on-campus classes, in regard to the course quality judgment made pursuant to the requirements of section 55002, and in regard to any local course quality determination or review process. Determinations and judgments about the quality of distance education under the course quality standards shall be made with the full involvement of faculty in accordance with the provisions of subchapter 2 (commencing with section 53200) of chapter 2.

NOTE: Authority cited: Section 66700 and 70901, Education Code.

References: Sections 70901, Education Code.

Guideline for Section 55202

This section emphasizes the extent to which course quality depends upon the full involvement of faculty in the design and application of DE courses. It discusses course quality standards for distance education and combines language formerly found in sections 55207 and 55209 which it replaces. Language is added to clarify that normal course quality standards apply to any portion of a course conducted through distance education.

§55204. Instructor Contact.

In addition to the requirements of section 55002 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district governing boards shall ensure that:

(a) Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes regular effective contact between instructor and students, and among students, either synchronously or asynchronously, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to sections 53200 et seq.

(b) Any portion of a course provided through distance education is conducted consistent with guidelines issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors.

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NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code.
Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

Guideline for Section 55204

This section defines what contact must be maintained between instructor and student and the latest amendment, 2-2019, includes responsibility for student-to-student contact.

Subdivision (a) stresses the responsibility of the instructor in a DE course to initiate regular contact with enrolled students to verify their participation and performance status and to conduct regular effective contact among students. The use of the term “regular effective contact” in this context suggests that students should have frequent opportunities to ask questions and receive answers from the instructor of record and to have regular opportunities to contact each other.

The last published Distance Education Guidelines, March 2004, issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors, as referenced in subdivision (b), establishes the principle that for DE courses there are a number of acceptable interactions between instructor and student, not all of which may require on-campus contact. Thus, districts and/or colleges will need to define “effective contact” including how often, and in what manner instructor-student interaction is achieved. It is important to document regular effective contact and how it is achieved. Since regular effective contact was declared an academic and professional matter, this documentation must include demonstration of collegial consultation with the academic senate, for example through its delegation to the local curriculum committee. A natural place for this to occur is during the separate course approval process (see section 55206) as well as during faculty evaluations, student surveys, and program review. Documentation should consist of the inclusion of information in applicable outlines of record on the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to each DE course/section or session. Local policies should establish and monitor minimum standards of regular effective contact.

Background:

In Distance Education courses, ensuring Regular Effective Instructor/Student Contact guarantees that 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 an on-campus course the instructor is present at each class meeting and interacts via all class announcements, lectures, activities and discussions that take a variety of forms. For example, discussions can be held as part of a lecture format, group work scenarios, or content review sessions. The instructor also serves as a content advisor when he or she answers questions both as they come up in class and as they arise in individual situations. These types of questions are dealt with via the telephone, email, face-to-face office visits, or live electronic interaction utilizing tools within the LMS for virtual conferencing.

Title 5 regulations do not make a distinction between regular and distance education courses beyond the need to have a separate curriculum approval process and the need to ensure regular effective contact. The guidelines do say that quality assurances within the regulations apply to all DE courses, which include online, hybrid and remote instruction courses. Therefore, it is assumed that those qualities of regular effective contact described above for the on-campus environment, should also be applied to the distance education situation. The DE Guidelines require colleges to develop a policy regarding regular effective contact that addresses “the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to each DE course/section or session”.

SAC Policy:

All DE courses at SAC, whether fully online, hybrid or remote instruction will include the regular effective contact as described below:

Regular and Effective Contact

- **Instructor-Initiated interaction:** Instructor-initiated contact refers to instructors contacting their students. Examples of instructor-initiated contact are, but are not limited to, providing regular interaction with

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students to determine that they are accessing and comprehending course material and that they are participating regularly in the activities in the course. Other aspects of instructor-initiated contact are providing timely assignment feedback, regularly clearing the roster of students who are not attending (attendance definition below), regularly participating in class discussions, and contacting students with additional feedback, such as recognition or helpful critiques of course participation or assignment rigor, assignment feedback timelines, examples, and other instructor-initiated contacts should be clearly defined in the syllabus and where relevant or helpful in the course.

- **Student-Initiated Contact:** Student-Initiated contact refers to student's ability to contact their instructor or other students in the course. Clear instructions should be provided by the instructor for preferred contact methods and expected response times.
- **Student-to-Student Interaction:** Student-to-Student Interaction refers to student's ability to contact each other in the course. Student-to-Student Interaction is a Title V requirement. Instructors are responsible for providing Student-to-Student interaction, such as group work, peer reviews, discussions, chats, study groups, etc. in the Course Management System.
- **Frequency:** DE Courses are considered the "virtual equivalent" to on-campus courses. Instructors will have weekly contact with students. Communication methods such as, discussion board participation, assignment feedback, or live or asynchronous communication may be used.
- **Establishing Instructor Communication Expectations:** 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 that are made available for students when the course officially opens each semester.

Sample Types of Contact:

Regarding the type of contact that will exist in all SAC DE courses, instructors may use any the following types of resources to initiate contact with students and among students:

- Interactive tools, such as regular discussion boards, blogs, wikis, and chat, within the course management system, with appropriate active instructor participation.
- General email/messages.
- Meaningful announcements in the Course Management System.
- Timely and meaningful feedback for student work.
- Instructor prepared e-lectures or introductions in the form of e-lectures to any publisher created materials (written, recorded, broadcast, etc.) that, combined with other course materials, creates the "virtual equivalent" of the on-campus class.
- Instructor-created videos with helpful information, instruction, and/or with the intent of humanizing the classroom.

Online Attendance and Drop Policy

Students are expected to complete regular and substantive coursework in online classes. In distance education context, coursework will be used to determine student attendance. Simply logging into an online class is not sufficient to demonstrate academic attendance by the student. Examples of coursework for online classes might include, but are not limited to, class discussions, completed assignments, completed quizzes or exams, group work, etc. Students who fail to submit substantive coursework, which meets the instructor's expectation for rigor, by the due date will be dropped from the class. Assignment rigor expectations may be given to the student in assignment feedback or may be defined in the instructors regular and effective contact policy in the course syllabus. Please refer to the class syllabus and the class section information, found in the class schedule, for the specific attendance (regular and substantive coursework) requirements.