CUYAMACA COLLEGE REGULAR AND EFFECTIVE CONTACT POLICY FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Any portion of a course conducted through distance education will include demonstrable and documented regular effective contact between instructor and students.

JUSTIFICATION AND OVERVIEW

Regular and effective contact is required by federal, state, ACCJC, and GCCCD Board policies. These policies are included at the end of this document.

Instructor-initiated contact is a key feature of distance education courses, and it is what makes it different from other types of courses, such as correspondence courses.

Regular and effective contact is a California Title V educational requirement that requires instructors to incorporate **instructor-initiated, regular, effective contact into online and hybrid course design and delivery**. This means that it is the responsibility of the instructor to initiate contact with students, make announcements, question and involve them in discussions, reach out to them when they are absent or missing work, and monitor their overall progress.

BEST PRACTICES

Best practices are derived from the Online Education Initiative (OEI) Course Design Rubric and include clarifying examples from experienced online teachers.

Orientation

1. **The instructor provides resources** to help students successfully start the course. Examples:
   a. Schedule notes that point students to orientation information
   b. Instructor webpage with a "how to get started" section and a link to the syllabus
   c. Welcome Announcement that explains how to login, necessary materials, orientation information, etc.
   d. Online or face-to-face orientation with a course overview, success tips, Canvas instructions, online activities (i.e. discussion, quiz, assignment, icebreaker), etc.
   e. Instructions the first time a student does an activity (discussion, quiz, assignment, etc.)
2. **The instructor provides a regular effective contact** plan that includes expected time frames for responses to inquiries, discussion board posts, and feedback on assignments and assessments. Example:
   a. a communication policy and a grading policy in the syllabus (see samples below)

Clear Expectations and Support

3. The instructor provides guidelines that explain **required levels of student participation** (i.e., quantity and quality of interactions). Examples:
    a. a policy for dropping inactive students in the syllabus (this is required due to regulations and audits -- see sample below)
    b. clear instructions and scoring rubrics provided for Discussions and Assignments
4. The instructor provides information about **technology support**. Examples:
    a. explanation of instructor's role for supporting course technology in orientation and/or syllabus
    b. instructions about how to get help with technology issues in orientation and/or syllabus
    c. Technology support links in Canvas
5. The instructor provides easy-to-find **instructor contact information**. Example:
    a. best ways to communicate and expected response time in Canvas Profile or on Canvas course home page

Communication Activities

6. The instructor provides and encourages **opportunities for student- initiated interaction with other students and the instructor, student-to-student interaction that reinforces course content and learning outcomes, and communication activities designed to build a sense of community among learners**. Examples:
    a. Canvas discussions
    b. Canvas Inbox (preferred over regular email because inbox documents communication within Canvas)
    c. Online conferences
    d. Group learning activities
    e. Peer review

Contact Throughout Course

7. The instructor provides **ongoing and consistent contact** throughout the duration of the course. Examples:
    a. Weekly announcement with an overview of the learning goals for the week to help establish relevance and guide learning strategies
    b. Constructive, timely feedback for graded assignments with expected response time stated in syllabus
    c. Ongoing and consistent instructor participation in online discussion
8. The instructor **communicates when unable to provide regular contact** due to unexpected reasons such as illness or a family emergency. Examples:
    a. Announcement that notifies students when contact is expected to resume
    b. Email to Dean for a lengthy absence (a week or more)
    c. Syllabus tells students what to do when teacher is inactive for more than 2 weeks.

CONTACT METHODS

Contact methods may include:

- orientation materials
- syllabus
- announcements
- online discussion
- Canvas Inbox
- synchronous meetings (chat, online conferencing, face-to-face meetings)
- feedback (written, video, audio)
- teacher created/curated learning materials (slides, video, documents, websites, simulations, textbooks, etc.)

SYLLABUS

In addition to the basic syllabus requirements described in the Faculty Handbook, the syllabus for an online course should also include a Communication Policy, a Grading Policy, and a Drop Policy.

Communication Policy

A regular and effective contact or communication policy should clarify best ways to communicate with the instructor and expected a response time.

sample 1:

Please post course related questions in the weekly Canvas discussion (visible to the entire class). If you have a personal question or would like to set up an online or face-to-face meeting, please contact your instructor using Canvas Inbox. This is preferred to email because sometimes student emails are filtered as spam or do not clearly identify the student and course section. Your teacher should respond to messages by the next business day. Responses tend to be brief. Students with disabilities are encouraged to notify the teacher and Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) early in the semester so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. If you don't hear from your teacher within 2 weeks, contact the department coordinator: first.last.@gcccd.edu.

sample 2:

Post any course related questions in Canvas weekly discussion. Discussions are visible to all students, for this reason all personal issues must be sent to me via Canvas Inbox or my email: first.last.@gcccd.edu. When posting in Canvas or sending emails, keep in mind that this is a college course and that you are not text messaging your friends, use appropriate language and do not use abbreviations. When emailing your instructor, keep messages brief and to the point. Be sure to use the subject line of your email to title your messages appropriately by identifying the course you are enrolled in. I will respond to messages within 24 hours, except on holidays or weekends, and I expect you to do the same.

Grading Policy

A grading policy should clarify how to turn work in and what happens if work is late.

> **sample 1:**
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> *You will use Canvas to access learning resources, see assignment instructions, turn in work, check grades, and communicate. Assignments turned in on time may be resubmitted without penalty, so be sure to check Canvas regularly for grades, scoring rubrics, and comments. After the due date, you will have a short grace period to turn in Assignments with a 50% penalty. Quizzes and Discussions are not available after the due date.*
>
> *An incomplete grade is given only when there is an emergency near the end of the semester.*
>
> **sample 2:**
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> *Students will be assigned weekly work from Canvas and xxxx. All online assignments are due at midnight. The first posting to each discussion on Canvas will be due on Mondays. All other online assignments on Canvas or xxxx will be due on Wednesdays. No late homework will be accepted! No makeup exams or quizzes will be given. For reasons of fairness and the integrity of the class, there are NO EXCEPTIONS! Therefore, the lowest exam and quiz grade will be dropped! If you miss one exam or quiz, that will be your lowest score and will be dropped.*

Attendance/Drop Policy

Due to regulations and audits, we are required to drop students who are not participating. The syllabus should clarify expectations for participation (activities and frequency) and consequences for inactivity.

> **sample 1:**
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> *Students who are inactive will be dropped from the course. If an entire week goes by with no activity on your part either through the discussion board participation, email communication, submission of work, quiz, or exam, you will be dropped. Therefore, it is imperative that you let me know if your contribution to the class will be interrupted.*
>
> **sample 2:**
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> *Students who are inactive for more than a week will be dropped from the course. Active participation in an online class means submitting assignments and taking quizzes on time, contributing to discussion regularly, and checking Canvas & email at least twice a week.*
>
> *Students who are inactive during the first three days of class will receive an email asking the reason they have not logged on. If by the end of the week students have not responded and have not been active in the course, the instructor will drop them to give other students the opportunity to add the class.*

BACKGROUND

US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

"Distance education is defined, for the purpose of accreditation review as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously."

CALIFORNIA REGULATIONS

TITLE 5 SECTION 55200 DEFINITION:

"Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology."

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, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, email, or other activities.

OEI Online Course Design Rubric

The OEI course design rubric devotes a section to communication, including regular effective contact.

ACCJC

Regular and substantive interaction between student and teacher

- Is central in determining whether a course is distance education rather than correspondence education.
- Is needed in every course that is fully online and in the online elements of courses otherwise on-site.
- Must be demonstrable and documented.
- Is vital to a college's relationship with the U.S. Department of Education for student financial aid eligibility.
- Is key to quality education and the student outcomes required by the ACCJC Accreditation Standards.

GCCCD AP/BP 4105 DISTANCE EDUCATION

The Chancellor shall establish procedures that will provide methods to authenticate or verify the student's identity for distance education and correspondence education courses.

Authentication and Verification of Student Identity:
One or more of these methods will be used to authenticate or verify the student's identity:

- Secure credentialing/login and password
- Proctored examinations, or
- New or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification

Definition:
Distance education is defined as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously.

Course Approval:
Each proposed or existing course offered by distance education shall be reviewed and approved separately. 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 Administrative Procedures 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:

A. Course Quality Standards: The same standards of course quality are applied to the distance education courses as are applied to traditional classroom courses.
B. Instructor Contact: Each section of the course that is delivered through distance education will include regular and effective contact between instructor and students.
C. 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.

State Authorization:
Under federal regulations, a student that is enrolled in any educational program including via distance education offered by a post-secondary institution cannot use Title IV program funds for that program if the institution the student is attending does not have authorization in the State in which the student resides.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

3/21/17: draft 1 written, OTLC comments solicited via email

5/12/17: draft 1 presented to OTLC and ITC

7/16/17: draft 2 incorporates suggestions from OTLC members and admin

9/12/17: shared with Grossmont. Draft 3 incorporates a few of their suggestions

9/14/17: Presented to Academic Senate

10/5/17: Approved by Academic Senate