

**DISTANCE EDUCATION**

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| <b>AP No.<br/>4105</b> |
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Rio Hondo College Distance Education Procedure for Regular Effective Contact.

- I. All courses to be taught utilizing distance education shall follow the curriculum approval procedures outlined in Administrative Procedure 4020, Program and Curriculum Development.
- II. No course shall be taught utilizing distance education until it has been submitted to and approved by the RHC Curriculum Committee.
- III. The same standards of course quality shall be applied to the distance education courses as are applied to traditional classroom courses.
- IV. All distance education courses shall be approved by the discipline specific faculty prior to submission to the RHC Curriculum Committee for approval.
- V. Each section of a distance education course will include regular effective contact between instructor and students.
- VI. All distance education courses shall meet all federal and state guidelines for accessibility and shall have a sign off by the appropriate college staff.
- VII. All distance education courses will continue to meet the approval criteria until substantive changes have been made to the course outlines. At that time, they must be resubmitted to the RHC Curriculum Committee.
- VIII. All distance education courses at Rio Hondo College, whether hybrid or fully online, will include regular effective contact as described below.
- IX. Instructor facilitated interaction: Instructors shall regularly facilitate interaction with students to determine that they are accessing and comprehending course material by encouraging regular participation and progression in all required activities of the course in a timely fashion in accordance with the published course schedule/syllabus.
- X. Quality of instructor-student interaction: Instructors shall ensure effective student-teacher interaction in distance education courses in the following ways:
  - allocating sufficient hours/weeks for contact with the option to meet with students face-to-face basis;
  - conducting student-teacher interaction with similar care and attention to students as that which occurs during face-to-face office hours/encounters;
  - using a variety of methods and resources to initiate and maintain contact with students that may include, but are not limited to, threaded discussion forums with appropriate instructor participation, e-mail or phone correspondence, weekly announcements in the Course Management System, timely evaluation of coursework, including comments and feedback, etc.; and
  - responding to student e-mails, postings, etc. in a timely fashion.

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- XI. Frequency of interaction: distance education courses are considered the “virtual equivalent” of face-to-face courses. Therefore, the frequency of the contact should approximate that as would be established in a regular, face-to-face course, while acknowledging the unique features of distance education instruction. An instructor-established policy describing the nature of instructor contact and feedback should be posted in the syllabus and/or other course documents that are made available for students when the course officially opens each term.
- XII. Context:
- (a) In hybrid or fully online 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 a face-to-face course, the instructor is present at each class meeting and interacts via all class announcements, lectures, activities, and discussions, which take a variety of forms. For example, discussions occur naturally between and among students and the instructor during lecture, group work, 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. Outside the classroom, these types of questions are dealt with via the telephone, e-mail, or face-to-face office visits.
  - (b) Title V 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. Therefore, it is assumed that those qualities of regular effective contact described above for the face-to-face environment should also be applied to the distance education situation. The distance education guidelines require colleges to develop a policy regarding regular effective contact that addresses “the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to each Distance Education course/section or session.”
- XIII. Section 55204 stresses the responsibility of the instructor in a Distance Education course to facilitate regular contact with enrolled students to promote their participation and success. The use of the term “regular effective contact” in this context suggests that students should have frequent opportunities to interact with the instructor of record. Section 55204 additionally acknowledges that, for Distance Education courses, there are a number of acceptable modes of interaction between instructor and student, not all of which require in-person contact. Thus, districts will define what qualifies as “effective contact.” Since regular effective contact was declared an academic and professional matter, this defining process must demonstrate collegial consultation with the academic senate.
- XIV. Applicable Regulations from the Distance Education Guidelines for the California Community Colleges:
- XV. Course Quality Standards (Section 55202)

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The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a course conducted through distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses, 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 and 70902, Education Code.]

**XVI. Instructor Contact (Section 55204)**

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, 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.

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

**XVII. Faculty Selection and Workload (Section 55208)**

- (a) Instructors of course sections delivered via distance education technology shall be selected by the same procedures used to determine all instructional assignments. Instructors shall possess the minimum qualifications for the discipline into which the course's subject matter most appropriately falls, in accordance with article 2 (commencing with section 53410) of subchapter 4 of chapter 4, and with the list of discipline definitions and requirements adopted by the Board of Governors to implement that article, as such list may be amended from time to time.
- (b) The number of students assigned to any one course section offered by distance education shall be determined by and be consistent with other district procedures related to faculty assignment. Procedures for determining the number of students assigned to a course section offered in whole or in part by distance education may include a review by the curriculum committee established pursuant to section 55002(a)(1).
- (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to impinge upon or detract from any negotiations or negotiated agreements between exclusive representatives and district governing boards.

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

XVIII. Reference:

Title 5, Section 55370 et seq.