

DISTANCE EDUCATION

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I. Introduction

- A. 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 course 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.*
- B. All Rio Hondo College distance education courses employ the use of secure credentialing/login and password to authenticate or verify a student's identity. Proctored examinations or other approaches to verifying student identification may be employed in addition to the use of the credentialing/login and password system as deemed appropriate by discipline faculty.*

II. Course approval

- A. All courses to be taught utilizing distance education shall follow the curriculum approval procedures outlined in Administrative Procedure 4020, Program Curriculum Development.*
- B. No course shall be taught utilizing distance education until it has been submitted to and approved for this mode of delivery by the RHC Curriculum Committee.*
- C. The same **minimum** standards of course quality shall be applied to ~~the~~ distance education courses as are applied to ~~traditional classroom in person~~ courses. *In addition, recognized effective practices for ensuring online course quality shall be applied to distance education courses per the Rio Hondo College education certification process.**
- D. All distance education courses shall be approved for distance education delivery by the discipline specific faculty prior to submission to the RHC Curriculum Committee for approval.*

III. Definition

- A. A distance education course is a course where the faculty and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of*

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communication technology. Distance education courses include fully-online (Online) and partially-online (Hybrid) courses. While Online courses must have near total online course/contact hour, Hybrid courses have at least 51% online delivery.

IV. Accessibility

- A. All distance education courses shall meet all federal and state guidelines for accessibility and shall have a sign off by the appropriate college staff.

V. Faculty certification

- A. All distance education instructors shall complete the online education certification process prior to teaching an online or hybrid course.

VI. Quality of instructor-student interaction

- A. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. All distance education courses at Rio Hondo College, whether hybrid or fully online, will include regular effective contact. Instructors shall ensure regular effective student- teacher interaction, and student-student 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 in-person;*
 - Conducting student-teacher interaction with similar care and attention to students as that which occurs *during face-to-face in-person* office hours/encounters;

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- 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, group chat, virtual office hours, 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 and as specified in the syllabus or other course documentation provided to students

VII. 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~~ *in-person* 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~~ *in-person* office visits.
- B. 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. Therefore, it is assumed that those qualities of regular effective contact described above for the ~~face-to-face~~ *in-person* 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."

VIII. *Regular effective contact*

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- A. 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.
- IX. Applicable ~~R~~regulations from the ~~D~~istance ~~E~~ducation ~~G~~uidelines for the California Community Colleges
- A. Course ~~Q~~uality ~~S~~tandards (~~Section 55204~~)
1. 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.]~~
- B. Instructor contact
1. In addition to the requirements of section 55002 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district governing boards shall ensure that:
 - Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes regular effective contact between instructor and students, and among students, either

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synchronously or asynchronously, 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.

- 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.]

- V. Faculty ~~S~~selection and ~~W~~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.~~

VI. *Reference Sources*/references:

- A. 34 CFR 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); ~~ACCJC Accreditation Standard 11.A.1.~~
- B. ACCJC Accreditation Standard 11.A.1
- C. Sections 66700, 70901, and 70902, Education Code.

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