

## DISTANCE EDUCATION

### I. DEFINITION

Distance Education (DE) means instruction in which the instructor and the student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of instructional technology. DE courses in the District are primarily offered through online modalities.

### II. COURSE APPROVAL

Each proposed or existing course offered by distance education shall be reviewed and approved separately for this mode of instruction by each college's Curriculum Committee; separate approval is mandatory if the course is fully online (100%) or hybrid (1%-99% online), subject to standard approval and revision regulations.

When approving distance education courses, each college's Curriculum Committee shall 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. The class offered at a distance will fulfill all the criteria of the course outline of record (COR), including comparable content delivery, learning objectives, assignments, and methods of evaluation as expected in face-to-face delivery modalities.
- B. **Instructor Qualifications:** Faculty teaching online courses shall be selected by the same procedures used to determine all instructional assignments, with additional consideration of the faculty member's experience and skill set related to online instruction.
- C. **Instructor Contact:** All approved DE courses, including fully online (100%) and hybrid (1%-99% online) courses, shall include regular effective contact between instructor and students. The colleges' Curriculum Committee's separate approval is to verify that the distance modality can and will provide this regular effective contact.
- D. **Instructors will use one or more of the following accepted practices of regular effective contact in their online courses:**
  1. **Regular Announcements:** It is best practice for faculty to make general announcements to students in online classes on a regular basis, such as through the use of the announcement area in the learning management system (LMS) or via emails to the entire class.
  2. **Orientation:** It is best practice for faculty to send a welcome communication to students which may include course information, expectations, contact information, and how to access online content. Additionally, orientations may take place online or face-to-face.

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3. **Establishing Expectations:** Faculty should include in their syllabus or course orientation a description of the frequency and timeliness of instructor-initiated contact and feedback, as well as expectations for student participation. It is best practice to include the timeframe for responding to student questions/inquiries (for example, “within two business days”), the timeframe for receiving feedback on student work (for example, “within 7-10 business days”), the timeframe for submission of assignments, and the quantity of discussion board postings required of the student.
4. **Faculty-Initiated Interaction:** It is best practice for faculty to regularly initiate interaction with students in a variety of ways, including but not limited to: asynchronous discussion board forums with appropriate faculty input, synchronous chats, video conferencing, individualized contact via phone or email, and, in the case of a hybrid course, regular face-to-face meetings.
5. **Content Delivery:** Faculty may provide content material either through online lectures (in written, video, and/or audio forms) and/or through introductions to materials not created by the instructor (such as publisher-provided materials, web sites, streaming video, etc.).
6. **Notifying Students of Faculty Unavailability/Offline Time:** Students should be notified if the instructor is unavailable/offline preventing regular effective contact for a prolonged period of time (e.g., four business days) for any reason (such as an illness or family emergency). Students should also be notified when instructor-initiated regular effective contact will resume.
7. **Notifying Administration of Faculty Absence:** If a faculty member must be offline for a period of time that results in the faculty member not being able to meet his or her regular effective contact for any given week, this would be considered an absence and the Dean of the division in which the course is taught must be notified. Absences will be handled in accordance with the negotiated faculty contract.
8. **Face-to-Face Forms of Contact (for hybrid modalities):** Faculty are encouraged to utilize standard accepted face-to-face forms of contact (i.e., group or individual meetings, lab class meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminars or study sessions, proctored exams, and field trips). Alternate field trip accommodations must be made available for students with documented disabilities.
9. **Office Hours / Student Consultation:** Faculty should be available to their distance education students during regularly scheduled office hours, which may be held either on-site or online, or for student consultation. This may include telephone contact, face-to-face contact, or online contact (through email, discussion board, or chat).
10. **Official Learning Management System (LMS):** The official South Orange County Community College District learning management system(s) (LMS) is/are the one(s) supported and provided district-wide.
11. **Student Verification:** A student’s identity will be verified by utilizing either a secure credentialing/login and password or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

III. ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

The following general principles should be followed to the extent possible to ensure that distance education courses are accessible to students with documented disabilities, in compliance with Section 508.

- A. Distance education courses are designed for all students to fully participate and benefit from an equitable college experience.
- B. Instructional materials and textbooks permit maximum opportunity for access by students with documented disabilities without the need for outside assistance (i.e., sign language interpreters, aides, or other forms of human assistance).
- C. Distance education resources provide "built-in" accommodations where possible (i.e., closed captioning or descriptive narration) and/or interface design/content layout per universal design best practices. Alternative testing format and extended test-taking time are provided to students with documented accommodations, which address the student's documented disability.

IV. SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSES – GUIDANCE FOR CAMERA USE

- A. The District must ensure compliance with FERPA and federal disability laws and protect student privacy, while maintaining academic freedom. If audio and visual student participation is essential as part of a course's instructional requirements or student safety, instructors may require cameras to be on, but should consider the following:
  - 1. Cameras may only be required to the extent necessary for fulfilling the course's instructional requirements or to ensure student safety, as determined by the discipline faculty;
  - 2. Adequate notice should be given to students about the requirement and time for cameras;
  - 3. The essential nature of video for instruction should be clearly identified; and,
  - 4. Faculty should allow students flexibility to turn off their cameras or mute audio unless needed as indicated above.
- B. Cameras may be optional for live synchronous online classes.
- C. Faculty may consider an alternative to video participation such as audio participation or use of the chat feature for attendance and discussion.

*References:*

*Education Code, Sections 67310 and 84850;*  
*Title 5, Sections 55200 et seq and 56000 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)*  
*ACCJC Accreditation Standard II.A.1*  
*ACCJC Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondance Education*