

DISTANCE EDUCATION

I. DEFINITION

Distance Education (DE) means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor(s) and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor(s) either synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies that may be used to offer distance education include:

- A. The internet;
- B. One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
- C. Audio conference; or
- D. Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (A) through (C) of this subdivision.

DE does not include correspondence courses.

DE courses in the District are primarily offered through online modalities. Course Modality definitions are:

- A. Only on campus: In-Person meetings only.
- B. Hybrid Asynchronous: On-campus meetings and asynchronous online instruction.
- C. Hybrid Synchronous: On-campus meetings and synchronous online instruction.
- D. Fully Online Asynchronous: No live stream.
- E. Fully Online Synchronous: All live stream.
- F. Fully Online Both Synchronous and Asynchronous: Online instruction consists of both live stream and no live stream.

II. COURSE APPROVAL

Each proposed or existing course offered by DE 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 DE 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 and substantive interaction between the instructor and students. The colleges’ Curriculum Committee’s separate approval is to verify that the distance modality can and will provide this regular and substantive interaction.

III. PUBLICATION OF COURSE STANDARDS

For each DE course offered, the college shall make available to the students through college publications all of the following facts before they enroll in the course:

- A. All online and in-person synchronous meeting days/dates and times;
- B. Any required asynchronous in-person activities;
- C. Any required technology platforms, devices, and applications;
- D. Any test or assessment proctoring requirements.

IV. INSTRUCTOR CONTACT

Any portion of a course conducted through DE includes regular and substantive interaction between the instructor(s) and students, (and among students, as described in the course outline of record), either synchronously or asynchronously, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or student sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities.

“Substantive interaction” means engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

- A. Providing direct instruction;
- B. Assessing or providing feedback on a student’s coursework;
- C. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- D. Facilitating group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- E. Other instructional activities approved by the colleges’ or programs’ accrediting agency.

Regular interaction between a student and instructor(s) shall be maintained prior to the student’s completion of a course or competency:

- A. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and

- B. Monitoring the student’s academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

Instructors will use the following accepted practices of regular effective contact in their online courses:

- A. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. 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.
- D. 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.
- E. 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.).
- F. 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.
- G. 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 their 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.
- H. 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.

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- I. Office Hours / Student Consultation: Faculty should be available to their DE 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).
- J. Official Learning Management System (LMS): The official District learning management system(s) (LMS) is/are the one(s) supported and provided district-wide.
- K. 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.

For purposes of calculating instructional times in the context of asynchronous DE, a week of instructional time is any week in which:

- A. The college makes available the instructional materials, other resources, and instructor support necessary for academic engagement and completion of course objectives; and
- B. The college expects enrolled students to perform educational activities demonstrating academic engagement during the week.

V. ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

“Accessible” means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally, and independently as a person without a disability. Although this might not result in identical ease of use compared to that of persons without disabilities, it still must ensure equal opportunity to the educational benefits and opportunities afforded by the technology and equal treatment in the use of such technology.

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

- A. 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).
- B. DE 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.

VI. SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSES – GUIDANCE FOR CAMERA USE

- A. The District must ensure compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (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’s 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 66700, 67310, 70901, and 84850
Title 5, Sections 55005 et seq.; 55200 et seq.; 55204 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 2
ACCJC Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education