

Victor Valley College Regular Effective Contact Requirement for Distance Education Classes

Regulations:

I. California Code of Regulations, Title 5 and Chancellor’s Office of the California Community Colleges, *Distance Education Guidelines* (2008)

55200. Definition and Application.

Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. All distance education is subject to the general requirements of this chapter as well as the specific requirements of this article. In addition, instruction provided as distance education is subject to the requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. §12100 et seq.) and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, (29 U.S.C. §794d).

CCCCO Guideline for Section 55200.

Ensuring that distance education courses, materials and resources are accessible to students with disabilities is a shared institutional responsibility. Faculty need to receive appropriate training in order to ensure that they understand what constitutes accessibility, and institutions must provide faculty with both the necessary training and resources to ensure accessibility. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12100 et seq.), section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794d), and California Government Code section 11135 all require that accessibility for persons with disabilities be provided in the development, procurement, maintenance, or use of electronic or information technology by a community college district using any source of state funds. (See Legal Opinion M 03-09). Title 5, section 55200 explicitly makes these requirements applicable to all distance education offerings.

55202. Course Quality Standards.

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.

CCCCO Guideline for Section 55202

This section emphasizes the extent to which course quality depends upon the full involvement of faculty in the design and application of DE courses. It discusses course quality standards for distance education and combines language formerly found in sections 55207 and 55209 that it replaces. Language is added to clarify that normal course quality standards apply to any portion of a course conducted through distance education.

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, 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.

Guideline for Section 55204

This section defines what contact must be maintained between instructor and student. It is virtually identical to section 55211 that it replaces, except that language has been added to clarify that rules related to conduct of distance education and effective instructor contact apply to any portion of a course conducted through distance education. Subdivision (a) stresses the responsibility of the instructor in a DE course to initiate regular contact with enrolled students to verify their participation and performance status. The use of the term “regular effective contact” in this context suggests that students should have frequent opportunities to ask questions and receive answers from the instructor of record.

The last published Distance Education Guidelines, March 2004, issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors, as referenced in subdivision (b), establishes the principle that for DE courses there are a number of acceptable interactions between instructor and student, not all of which may require in-person contact. Thus, districts and/or colleges will need to define “effective contact” including how often, and in what manner instructor-student interaction is achieved. It is important to document regular effective contact and how it is achieved. Since regular effective contact was declared an academic and professional matter, this documentation must include demonstration of collegial consultation with the academic senate, for example through its delegation to the local curriculum committee. A natural place for this to occur is during the separate course approval process (see section 55206) as well as during faculty evaluations, student surveys, and program review. Documentation should consist of the inclusion of information in applicable outlines of record on the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to each DE course/section or session. Local policies should establish and monitor minimum standards of regular effective contact.

II. Code of Federal Regulations – Title 34: Education #602.3

Correspondence education means:

(1) Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor.

(2) Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is

primarily initiated by the student.

(3) Correspondence courses are typically self-paced.

(4) Correspondence education is not distance education.

Distance education means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this definition to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include?

(1) The internet;

(2) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;

(3) Audio conferencing; or

(4) Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition.

III. VVC Requirements:

Regular effective contact, as described below, is required in all DE classes:

1. Instructor-initiation:

Unlike correspondence education, in which students are responsible for initiating contact with the instructor, DE instructors must directly and actively initiate interaction with their students.

2. Interaction:

Instructors are required to determine whether or not students participating in DE classes and how well they are performing in these classes. Types of instructor initiated contact may include 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. Providing students with an open-ended “Ask the Teacher” forum is appropriate but does not by itself satisfy the requirement for effective instructor initiated interaction.

3. Frequency and Duration:

DE Courses must be the “virtual equivalent” to face-to-face courses. Therefore, duration and frequency of instructor contact in a DE class must be no less than in a face-to-face section of the same course. The number of hours that an instructor is available (in either an asynchronous or synchronous mode) to students enrolled in a DE class must be at least equal to the number of hours of availability required for face-to-face students. Instructor contact with DE students must be distributed over the course of the instructional week and must occur as often as appropriate for the course. A statement regarding frequency of contact will be included in each DE class syllabus.

4. Interrupted Contact:

Unanticipated and unavoidable interruptions in DE instructor contact (such as illness or a family emergency that takes the instructor offline) require that students be notified via class announcement, email, and/or Discussion Board of the interruption and its duration. In the event that contact is not possible for four or more days, a substitute instructor must be engaged to assist students until the instructor of record is available once again.

5. Types of Contact:

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Online class instructors and hybrid class instructors in which there is a substantial reduction in seat time must, at a minimum, use all the methods listed below to initiate contact with students. Instructors of hybrid classes with smaller reductions in seat time are required to use one or more of the following methods.

- Threaded discussion forums within the course management system, with appropriate instructor participation. (“Ask the Teacher” forums are good but do not satisfy the regular effective contact requirement.).
- Class email.
- Announcements posted in the Course Management System at least once each week.
- Timely feedback on student work.
- Instructor prepared e-lectures or introductions in the form of e-lectures to any publisher created materials (written, recorded, broadcast, etc.) that, combined with other course materials, creates the “virtual equivalent” of the face-to-face class.

In addition to these required forms of contact, DE instructors are encouraged to use other forms of communication including those mentioned above in section 55204 of Title 5.

- Group or individual meetings
- Orientation and review sessions
- Supplemental seminar or study sessions
- Field trips
- Library workshops
- Telephone contact
- Correspondence
- Voice mail
- Individual e-mail
- CCCConfer (a web conferencing tool that is free to the California Community College System. <http://www.cccconfer.org>)
- Video conference
- Regular podcasts
- Virtual Office Hours via the chat function of the LMS
- Other synchronous or asynchronous methods as appropriate

It is suggested that Instructors should have a threaded discussion that is set aside for general questions about the course and may wish to have weekly or other timely, question and answer sessions available to students. This may also be accomplished through virtual office hours.

Adapted from Mt. San Jacinto College and Grossmont College.