

# GROSSMONT COLLEGE POLICY REGULAR AND SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION POLICY FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

**Any portion of a course conducted through distance education will include demonstrable and documented Regular and substantive interaction between instructor and students and student to student.**

*Instructor-initiated contact is a key feature of distance education courses, and it is what makes it different from other types of courses, such as correspondence courses.*

## **Regular and substantive interaction)**

“Regular and substantive interaction” is a California Title V educational requirement that stipulates that all instructors, including online instructors, must make certain that there are measures for **instructor-initiated**, regular, effective contact incorporated into online and hybrid course design and delivery. This means that it is the responsibility of the instructor to initiate contact with students, email them, make announcements, question and involve them in discussions, reach out to them when they are absent or missing work, and monitor their overall progress.

## **Title V section 55200 Definition:**

“Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication”

**Title V Section 55204** states that “any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes regular effective contact (Regular and substantive interaction) between instructor and students. **To be considered regular effective contact, the contact with students in online and hybrid classes must be instructor initiated, with expectations for methods used and timeliness clearly established and communicated to students**

## **What is a DE course?**

DE Courses are considered the “virtual equivalent” to face to face courses. Therefore, the frequency of the contact will be at least the same as would be established in a regular, face to face course. At **the very least**, the number of instructor contact hours per week that would be available for face to face students, will also be available, in asynchronous and/or synchronous mode, with students in the DE format. Contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure that regular contact is maintained, given the nature of asynchronous instructional methodologies, over the course of a week and should occur as often as is appropriate for the course.

Instructors will regularly initiate interaction with students to determine that they are accessing and comprehending course material and that they are participating regularly in the activities in the course. Providing students with an open ended question forum, although appropriate, does not constitute the entirety of effective instructor initiated interaction. Regular and substantive interaction contact is required by federal, state,

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ACCJC, and GCCCD Board policies.  
(These are included at the end of this document.)

**Instructor presence:** Instructors needs to create a sense of “presence” for which students are aware and with whom interaction is available. Presence is the most important best practice for an online course (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010, p. 53) Research has shown that an important component in students ‘performance in and satisfaction with their online course is the active participation of the instructor within their course (Picciano, 2002;; Rovai, 2002 Swan & Shih, 2005)

**Timely feedback** that replicates the contact of F2F courses, with communication between faculty and students occurring no less frequently than in a comparable face-to-face course

**Interaction between faculty and students should use multiple channels**, besides just conversations (e--mail tool in Canvas) discussions, and regular announcements, are added ways to connect with students. Faculty should use a variety of communication tools available in Canvas in their classes. These tools include both real time modes, such as Chat and Conferences and asynchronous tools such as Conversations, which is the e-mail/inbox app in Canvas.

Best practices are derived from the [Online Education Initiative \(OEI\) Course Design Rubric](#) and include clarifying examples from experienced online teachers.

## **ORIENTATION**

**The instructor provides resources** to help students successfully start the course.

Examples:

- Schedule notes that point students to orientation information
- Welcome Announcement that explains how to login, necessary materials, orientation information, etc.
- Online or face-to-face orientation with a course overview, success tips, Canvas instructions, online activities (i.e. discussion, quiz, assignment, icebreaker), etc.
- Instructions the first time a students does an activity (discussion, quiz, assignment, etc.)
- The instructor provides a regular effective contact plan that includes expected time frames for responses to inquiries, discussion board posts, and feedback on assignments and assessments including a communication policy and a grading policy in the syllabus

## **CLEAR EXPECTATIONS & SUPPORT**

1. **The instructor provides guidelines that explain required levels of student participation** (i.e., quantity and quality of interactions).

Examples:

- a policy for dropping inactive students in the syllabus (this is required due to regulations and audits -- see sample below)
- clear instructions and scoring rubrics provided for Discussions and Assignments

**The instructor provides information about technology support.**

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Examples:

- explanation of instructor's role for supporting course technology in orientation and/or syllabus
- instructions about how to get help with technology issues in orientation and/or syllabus
- Technology support links in Canvas
- The instructor provides easy-to-find instructor contact information.
- best ways to communicate and expected response time in Canvas Profile or on Canvas course home page

## **COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

### **CONTACT THROUGHOUT COURSE**

The instructor provides and encourages opportunities for student- initiated interaction with other students and the instructor, student-to-student interaction that reinforces course content and learning outcomes, and communication activities designed to build a sense of community among learners.

Examples:

- Canvas discussions
- Syllabus
- Announcements with an overview of the learning goals for the week to help establish relevance and guide learning strategies
- Instructor feedback (grades, use of rubrics, audio and/or video feedback)
- Canvas Inbox (preferred over regular email because inbox documents communication within Canvas)
- Online conferences and/or other synchronous sessions
- Group learning activities
  - Peer review
  - Constructive, timely feedback for graded assignments with expected

response time stated in syllabus

- Ongoing and consistent instructor participation in online discussion

The instructor communicates when unable to provide regular contact due to unexpected reasons such as illness or a family emergency.

## **CONTACT METHODS**

Contact methods may include:

- orientation materials
- syllabus
- announcements
- online discussion
- Canvas Inbox
- synchronous meetings (chat, online conferencing, face-to-face meetings)
- feedback (written, video, audio)
- Teacher created/curated learning materials (slides, video, documents, websites, simulations, textbooks, etc.)

## **Policies**

In addition to the basic syllabus requirements the syllabus for an online course should also include Communication Policy, a Grading Policy, and a Drop Policy.

- **COMMUNICATION POLICY**  
A regular and substantive interaction or communication policy should clarify best ways to communicate with the instructor and expected a response time.
- **GRADING POLICY**  
A grading policy should clarify how to turn work in and what happens if work is late.
- **ATTENDANCE/DROP POLICY**  
Due to regulations and audits, we are

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required to drop students who are not participating. The syllabus should clarify expectations for participation (activities and frequency) and consequences for inactivity.

## **BACKGROUND**

US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
“Distance education is defined, for the purpose of accreditation review as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously.”

## **CALIFORNIA REGULATIONS**

### **TITLE 5 SECTION 55200 DEFINITION:**

“Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology.”

[http://www.dspssolutions.org/sites/default/files/resources/California Code of Regulations CA ADC Section 55200 Distance Education acc 07.11.17.acc .pdf](http://www.dspssolutions.org/sites/default/files/resources/California%20Code%20of%20Regulations%20CA%20ADC%20Section%2055200%20Distance%20Education%20acc%2007.11.17.acc.pdf)

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, email, or other activities.

## **OEI Online Course Design Rubric**

The OEI course Design rubric devotes a section to communication, including regular effective contact

<https://onlinenetworkofeducators.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CVC-OEI-Course-Design-Rubric-rev.2.14.2019.pdf>

## **ACCJC**

<https://accjc.org/wp-content/uploads/Distance-Correspondence-Education.pdf>