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AP 4105

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References: Title 5, Section 53200, 55002, 55200, 55202, 55204, 55206, 55210; Federal
Regulations 34 CFR 602.17, 34 CFR 668.22, 38 CFR 21.4203; Section 508 of the Rehabilitation
Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794d); California Community Colleges Distance Education
Guidelines, March 2008.

Definitions

- Distance Education: Instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by
  distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology (§ 55200)

- Online: A course that uses web-based tools and in which 100% of the instruction and
  interaction between instructor and student is done online (proctored exams still allowed
  for this classification)

- Hybrid: A course that replaces some, but not all, face-to-face class time with web-based
  tools

- Web Enhanced: A face-to-face course that does not replace any face-to-face seat time but
  requires access to web-based tools

Course Approval

- The review and approval of new and existing distance education courses shall follow the
  curriculum approval procedures outlined in Administrative Procedures 4020, Program
  and Curriculum Development.

- No course shall be taught via distance education until it has been reviewed and received
  separate approval for distance education by each college's Curriculum Committee. This
  requirement applies if any portion of the instruction in a course section is designed to be
  provided through distance education (§ 55206).

Certification

When approving distance education courses, the Curriculum Committee will certify the following:

- Course Quality Standards: The same standards of course quality were applied to the distance education courses as are applied to traditional classroom courses (§ 55002, 55202).

- Course Quality Determinations: Determinations and judgments about the quality of the distance education course were made with the full involvement of the Curriculum Committee(s) approval procedures (§ 53200).

- Instructor Contact: Each section of the course that is delivered through distance education will include regular, effective contact between instructor and students (§ 55204). 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.

  Ensuring regular, effective instructor/student contact guarantees that the student in an online or hybrid course 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 course the instructor is present at each class meeting and interacts with the class through announcements, lectures, activities and discussions. 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. These types of questions are dealt with via the telephone, email, or face-to-face office visits.

  For distance education courses there are a number of acceptable modes of interaction between student and instructor, not all of which require in-person contact (§ 55204):

  ○ Initiated Interaction: Instructors will regularly initiate interaction with students and determine that they are accessing and comprehending course material and 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.

  ○ Frequency: DE courses are considered the 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. Contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure that regular contact is maintained over the course of a week and should occur, at the very least, the same number of instructor contact hours per week that would be available for face-to-face students.

  ○ Establishing Expectations and Managing Unexpected Instructor Absence: An instructor-and/or department-established policy describing the frequency and timeliness of instructor initiated contact and instructor feedback, will be posted in the syllabus and/or other course documents that are made available for students when the course officially opens each semester. If the instructor must be out of contact briefly for an unexpected reason (such as illness or a family emergency that takes the instructor offline),

notification to students will be made in the announcements area of the course that includes when the students can expect regular, effective contact to resume. If the offline time results in a lengthy absence (i.e. more than three or four days) a substitute instructor should be sought who can assist students while the instructor is unavailable.

- Minimum Contact: Regarding the type of contact that will exist in all YCCD DE courses, instructors will use the following resources to initiate contact with students:
    - Discussion forums (or equivalent) with appropriate instructor participation
    - Email
    - Timely response to student emails or inquiries
    - Weekly announcements in the Learning Management System
    - Timely feedback for student work
    - Instructor-prepared materials (text-based, audio files, and/or video files), in addition 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

- Other Types of Contact: Instructors may also choose to use other forms of communication, as mentioned in Section 55204 of Title 5. ("…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") and/or teleconference, video conference, pod cast, or other synchronous technologies may also be included.

    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.

Duration of Approval

All distance education courses approved under this procedure will continue to meet the approval criteria until there are substantive changes to the course outline. At that time, they must be resubmitted to the Curriculum Committee for review and approval (§ 55002, 55206).

Student Authentication

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 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. (34 CFR 602.17)

Each college's Chief Instructional Officer or designee shall utilize one or more of these methods to authenticate or verify the student's identity;

- Secure credentialing/login and password;
- Proctored examinations;
- Lock down browsers; and/or

- Other technologies such as anti-plagiarism software and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

Student Attendance Dates

Each college's Director of Financial Aid will ensure compliance with Federal Regulations (*34* CFR 668.22) pursuant to Return to Title IV Funds (R2T4) and VA-ONCE Notice of Change (38 CFR 21.4203) using faculty verification of last actual date of attendance (evidenced by active participation and reflected in the assessment of regular, effective contact (Distance Education Guidelines) to calculate student's earned and unearned portion of Title IV Aid.

Instructors are responsible for verifying student attendance dates in all sections in which:

- earned and unearned portions of Federal Student Aid (Title IV) are determined based upon the amount of time the student spent in attendance, and/or
- last actual date of attendance is used to determine status changes for students receiving Veteran (VA-ONCE) funds.

Ongoing Responsibility of the District:

The District will maintain records and report data through the Management Information System on the number of students and faculty participating in new courses or sections of established courses offered through distance education (§ 55210).

See also:

- WCC Curriculum Handbook: http://wcc-curriculum.yccd.edu/handbook.aspx
- YC Curriculum Handbook: http://php.yccd.edu/documents/viewdocument.php?id=2643

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