LPC Regular Effective Contact Guidelines

State Regulations:

Title 5 and the Distance Education Guidelines for the California Community Colleges state:

55200. Definition and Application.

Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by time and/or distance and interact through the assistance of 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 of 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).

Note: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code; title 29 United States Code section 794d; and title 42 United States Code sections 12100, 12101, 12102, 12103, 12131, 12132, 12133 and 12134.

55202. Course Quality Standards.

The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a class conducted through distance education as are applied to in-person classes, 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: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Section 70901, Education Code.

Guideline for Section 55202

The components in the official course outline of record (COR) apply equally to all course offerings, regardless of modality. When the COR is regularly reviewed according to the standard for approval described in title 5, section 55002 (grading policy, units, intensity, requisites, difficulty, and level), the DE Addendum shall also be simultaneously reviewed to assure alignment with updates in the COR, and assure compliance with title 5, section 55206 on Separate Course Approval, and with section 55200 on Accessibility.

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, and among students, either synchronously or asynchronously, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, 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

Interactions between instructor and student and among students for DE courses vary from course to course. Thus, districts and/or colleges will need to define "regular effective contact" including how often, and in what manner instructor-student interaction, and student-to-student interaction is achieved, through collegial consultation with the district or college's academic senate.

Federal Regulations:

From the ACCJC's policy on [Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education](#):

This policy reflects the federal regulatory requirements regarding distance education and correspondence education.

Definition of Distance Education (34 C.F.R. § 600.2.)

Distance Education means:

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) 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) Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3).

Definition of Correspondence Course (34 C.F.R. § 600.2.)

(1) A course provided 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 instructors. Interaction between instructors and students in a correspondence course is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student.
(2) If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, the Secretary considers the course to be a correspondence course.
(3) A correspondence course is not distance education.

Definition of Regular and Substantive Interaction

Regular and Substantive Interaction is met if it satisfies at least two of five conditions:

(1) providing direct instruction;
(2) assessing or providing feedback on a student's course work;
(3) providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
(4) facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency;
(5) other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency:

(1) Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and

(2) 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.

Background:

Regular effective contact between instructor and students, and among students, is a basic tenet in all courses, and Distance Education is no exception. According to Title 5, all DE courses, whether they are fully online or hybrid, must demonstrate regular effective contact. For hybrids, this contact is required not only during on-campus meetings, but it is also required during the virtual meetings.

The ACCJC has also stated that "regular and substantive interaction" in all online and hybrid courses is a requirement for accreditation. Furthermore, if there is no such contact, DE courses can be designated correspondence courses during an auditing process, and this can affect the college's ability to provide federal financial aid to students. LPC's Regular Effective Contact Guidelines aims to set forth the minimum standards of regular effective contact as stated in the DE Guidelines for the California Community Colleges, along with the minimum standards for regular and substantive interaction as stated in ACCJC policy.

LPC Guidelines:

All DE courses at LPC, whether fully online or hybrid, should include regular effective contact as described below:

- **Initiated interaction:** Instructors should 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.
- **Fostered interaction:** Instructors should foster or facilitate interaction among students to promote a collaborative learning environment.
- **Frequency:** DE courses are considered the "virtual equivalent" of on-campus courses. Therefore, the frequency of the contact should occur as often as is appropriate for the course.
- **Establishing expectations:** A syllabus that sets expectations for instructor response time, grade turnaround time, student participation, and instructor participation should be posted in the course and made available for students when the course officially opens each semester. Including rubrics in your course also helps establish expectations for assignments.

Type of Contact:

Regarding the type of contact that will exist in all LPC DE courses, instructors should, along with providing instructional content, use some combination of the following resources not only to initiate and engage in meaningful contact with students, but also to foster and facilitate student-to-student interaction:

- Asynchronous ~~i~~interactive tools, such as discussion boards, groups, ~~web conferencing,~~ wikis, ~~chat,~~ email, and ~~other~~ forms of social media. Regular instructor participation while using these tools should deal with academic content. Instructors should regularly provide substantive feedback and facilitate all discussions.
- Synchronous tools, such as web conferencing and chat. If using synchronous tools for live lecturing, include activities beyond the synchronous interaction.
- ~~General email~~
- Regular announcements in the course management system that offer feedback that is

academic in nature.
- Regular and timely academic feedback for student work. For example, tell a student why he got a B and what he can do to get an A. Also, use rubrics for grading. Academic feedback does not include reminders about deadlines or other logistical matters. The feedback should go beyond perfunctory comments such as "good job" or "great work."

Documentation:

Evidence of instructor-initiated interaction is necessary for accreditation and auditing purposes. Although all courses will remain available in the course management system, instructors are encouraged to export their completed courses and download them for safekeeping. Instructors are encouraged to record, and make available, any synchronous exchanges with students—such as virtual office hours—and to use the email tool within the course management system, as opposed to using an email account outside of it. Email exchanges within the system are automatically archived.

Monitoring Interaction:

At LPC, interaction is primarily monitored through the online instructor evaluation process negotiated by the Chabot-Las Positas Community College District and the Faculty Association. To a lesser degree, the college reviews courses prior to their initial launch to determine if they have the proper structures set up to ensure proper interaction. At the beginning and in the middle of each semester, faculty are sent checklists reminding them of the need for interaction and providing examples.

Insufficient Interaction:

According to federal auditors, the following are not considered instructor-initiated interactions:

- Computer-generated feedback on objective assessments
- Live lectures that do not require the students to interact with an instructor or to engage in post-lecture activities
- Recorded webinars and reading materials if the course design materials do not require the students to watch the webinars and then interact with an instructor
- Contact with mentoring staff who are not directly providing instruction on the course's subject matter
- Lecture videos that do not require the students to watch and then interact with an instructor
- Open-ended question discussion forums