



AP 4105 Distance Education

References: Education Code Section 66700;
Education Code Sections 70901 et seq.;
Title 5 Section 55002.5;
Title 5 Sections 55200 et seq.;
Title 5 Sections 55260 et seq.;
34 Code of Federal Regulations Section 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

Approved: July 2002

Last Revised: August 2003; August 2006; August 2007; February 2008; July 2011; October 2014;
December 2024

Last Reviewed:

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 defines distance education as education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, synchronously and asynchronously.

I. Student Authentication

Consistent with federal regulations pertaining to federal financial aid eligibility, the District authenticates or verifies 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 provides to each student, at the time of registration, a statement of the process in place to protect student privacy and estimated additional student charges associated with verification of student identity, if any.

The District utilizes one or more of these methods to authenticate or verify the student's identity:

- secure credentialing through username and password
- proctored examinations
- use new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification

II. A Culture of Integrity

Each distance education instructor completes a series of training workshops and a course review which considers best practices in constructing online courses that minimize the opportunity for cheating. The District encourages faculty to set high standards for performance

in distance education courses. The campus-wide policy on academic integrity is set forth in AP 5521 Academic Integrity, including for distance education courses.

III. Course Approval

The review and approval of new and existing distance education courses follows the curriculum approval procedures outlined in AP 4020 Program and Curriculum Development. Distance education courses are approved under the same conditions and criteria as all other courses.

Separate approval by the Curriculum Committee of each proposed or existing course is mandatory if any portion of the instruction in a course or a course section is designed to be provided through distance education. Instructors must be certified to teach individual distance education courses as outlined in the Distance Education Approval process below.

IV. Instructor Distance Education Approval

In order to maintain compliance with ACCJC and with state and federal regulations, all faculty teaching in a distance education modality must be approved to teach online. The approval process consists of three steps.

- A. Complete the Online Readiness Training (ORT). This training is required of all faculty as determined by the Chief Instruction Officer (regardless of modality) in preparation for any potential emergency short-term remote pivots. This training is sufficient for short-term remote pivots; instructors scheduled to be online for the duration of the course must complete this item as well as the next two.
- B. Complete the Distance Education Training (DET). By the end of this training, faculty will be able to:
 1. Identify and understand federal and state regulations that impact distance education policies and practices.
 2. Design introductory activities that support the development of an online learning community.
 3. Develop clear and supportive online course policies.
- C. DE Addendum. Instructors will need to complete a DE Addendum for EACH course they wish to teach online (each course, not each section). The DE Addendum must be approved in order for the class to be scheduled for that instructor. The DE Addendum:
 1. Identifies the modality of the class (asynchronous, synchronous, or hybrid).
 2. Describes methods, materials, and any other components used to ensure the course meets expected academic standards and instructional quality.
 3. Describes how the instructor meets the Regular Substantive Interaction Requirements (RSI) outlined below.
 4. Describes the regular substantive interaction among students.
 5. Describes how each student learning outcome (SLO) in the course is taught and assessed.
 6. Confirms that the course syllabus meets syllabus requirements.
 7. Confirms that the course meets accessibility requirements. "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.

V. Regular Substantive Interaction (RSI)

Any portion of a course conducted through distance education must include “regular and substantive interaction” (RSI) between instructor and students, and among students. Through this interaction, instructors equitably engage students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion. RSI includes all of the following:

- A. Providing instruction that aligns with and supports success with the SLOs;
- B. Utilizing consistent instructor-generated content that allows students to detect instructor presence;
 - 1. “Instructor-generated content” can be demonstrated using a variety of methods, including but not limited to:
 - a. Using third-party content but creating your own introductions or context for the external readings and activities;
 - b. Using your own lectures or demonstrations – via text, recorded video, or synchronous sessions;
 - c. Providing your own introductory content for each unit;
 - d. Creating your own assignments and/or discussions;
 - e. Sending announcements or emails to the entire class;
 - 2. “Instructor presence” can be detected through various humanizing methods, including but not limited to: introductory videos, photo of the instructor, video tutorial(s) for navigating the class and/or accessing supplemental materials
- C. Promptly responding to questions about the content of a course, according to how the timeliness of responses is defined in the course syllabus;
- D. Engaging in substantive interactions with students on a predictable and consistent basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course;
- E. Facilitating and requiring student-to-student interactions related to course content;
 - 1. Examples could include but are not limited to: discussion boards with replies, peer review, group work, or synchronous class meetings.
 - 2. Synchronous meeting dates/times should be listed in the schedule of classes for a student to see BEFORE they enroll and should consider Butte College’s camera policy.
- F. Assessing and providing individualized, specific, and instructor-generated feedback on each student’s coursework in a timely manner;
- G. Monitoring the student’s academic engagement and success, and promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed, on the basis of such monitoring or upon request by the student.

The instructor’s specific policies regarding the frequency and timeliness of instructor-initiated contact and feedback are part of the syllabus or other course documents made available to students at the start of the course. These expectations, as communicated with students, shall

define a reasonable, course-specific meaning of “promptly” and “timely” as used in this guidance.

VI. Duration of Approval

To remain approved, faculty will be required to re-submit the most current version of the DE Addendum for each course they may teach. This will occur on a three-year cycle.

VII. Instructor Absences

If an illness, family emergency, or other unexpected reason prevents the instructor from continuing regular contact, the instructor or department informs students within the course when regular contact is likely to resume. In the event of prolonged absence, the instructor makes appropriate arrangements for class continuation through their dean.

VIII. Publication of Course Modality

Courses offered in the distance education format will include the following information in the course schedule:

- 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.

IX. Instructional Time

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

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

X. Student Services

The Vice President for Student Services regularly reviews the range of student services appropriate to support the distance education courses offered, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, placement, and counseling.

XI. Facilities and Finances

The District regularly reviews the adequacy of equipment, maintenance and support personnel to ensure the effectiveness of the distance education offerings. Facilities, staffing, equipment, and other resources associated with the viability and effectiveness of the college’s distance education offerings are an integral part of the institution’s long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes.