REGULAR & EFFECTIVE CONTACT POLICY FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Regular & Effective Contact Policy for Distance Education

Regular and effective contact between instructor and student and among students in online classes significantly increases student success and humanizes the online learning experience [1].

- **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.
- **Student-to-student interaction** is also a key feature of distance education, and it is what makes it different from other types of courses, such as a self-paced course.

These forms of contact are also required by federal regulatory requirements, state education codes, and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges(ACCJC), and are recommended by the Statewide Academic Senate for Community Colleges[2]. Regular and effective contact is a California Title V educational requirement that requires instructors to incorporate instructor-initiated, regular, effective contact into online and hybrid course design and delivery. This means that it is the responsibility of the instructor to initiate contact with students, make announcements, question and involve them in discussions, reach out to them when they are absent or missing work, and monitor their overall progress. It is also the responsibility of the instructor to design opportunities for students to interact with other students in the course via discussion boards, group collaboration, peer review, and other student-to-student engaged activities. This procedure outlines requirements for "Starting the Course" and creating opportunities for "Faculty Initiated" and "Student-to-Student Initiated" contact.

STARTING THE COURSE

Introductions
The following elements help students orient to the course syllabus and the course learning management system and assist the student in starting the class successfully:

- A "Welcome Letter" or other introduction to the course helps establish

---

[1] See Baker 2010; See Glazier 2016

[2] See Federal Regulatory Requirements; See Title V State Code of Regulations; See ACCJC Policy on Distance Ed; See ASCCC "Ensuring an Effective Online Program"

contact between instructor and student and guides the student to start the course.

- An instructor-created Home Page provides a starting point, establishes instructor presence, and helps students navigate to course materials.
- An orientation shows students how to navigate the course, contact the instructor, and interact with course elements.

Syllabus

In addition to regular syllabus policies as recommended on the *DVC Syllabus Guidelines*, the following policies can clarify means and modes of instructor contact.

- Online Response Times
    - Indicate how a student can contact the instructor and when the instructor is available. Instructor response times are provided to clarify when students should anticipate a reply.
- Online Office Hours
    - Designate availability and instructions for when and how to access online office hours
- Online Communication Policies
    - Create ground rules for online communication that align with the student code of conduct and the college's policies on student privacy, protection, and technology use.
- Online Student Support Services
    - Identify how to access online student support services

FACULTY INITIATED CONTACT DURING THE COURSE

There are multiple ways that an instructor can initiate contact with their students.

Announcements
- Regular course announcements reflect on activities taking place in the course or around the wider college campus.
- Regular use of the announcement tool (recommended at least once a week) helps guide students through the learning process and clarifies the course content and expectations.
- The announcement remains in the course LMS and keeps a permanent record of that contact.

Emails
- Instructors keep a record of any communication that occurs via email. It is highly recommended to use the Canvas email since it is linked with the coursework and can be tracked in the Canvas course analytics.

- Instructors respond to student emails within a reasonable timeframe (24-48 hours on weekdays) and state the expected response time in the syllabus
- Instructors will inform students of extended absence due to a conference, leave (jury duty, etc.), or other unforeseen circumstances

Faculty Participation on Discussion Boards
- Faculty participates in discussion boards by posting replies to student work, adding comments, or asking questions to further student thinking. While some faculty find that their presence on the discussion can help direct or deepen the conversation, other faculty choose not to respond directly on the discussion board but do provide substantive interaction and commentary through the gradebook feedback areas.
- Other options for participating on discussion boards include providing all class feedback highlighting particular posts as best practices and inviting further reflection.

Assignment Feedback
- Instructor incorporates assignments that include opportunities for individualized descriptive and specific feedback and go beyond automatically graded quizzes.
- When appropriate, instructor can include rubrics to enhance targeted feedback.
- Assignment feedback is timely as determined by the nature of the content.

Office Hours & Conferences
- Regularly occurring office hours or special study sessions provide instructor-to-student and student-to-student contact.
- ConferZoom or other video conferencing can enhance this interaction as well as provide a record or document of the video-conference session.

Faculty Contact via Publisher Packs or Third Party Tools
- Instructors who use third party tools, such as publisher packs or other digital apps, must authenticate students through the college's learning management system (LMS).
- When third party tools are used for instructor-to-student contact, instructors should use the LMS to document this interaction.

STUDENT-TO-STUDENT INITIATED CONTACT IN A COURSE

The following are multiple ways that an instructor can initiate contact among students.

Peer-to-Peer Replies on Discussion Boards
- Instructors encourage student-to-student interactions on Discussion Boards by enabling threaded replies or otherwise indicating through instructions or rubrics that peer replies are expected.

Small Group Collaborations & Group Projects
- Instructors create opportunities for small groups and allow students to work collaboratively.
- Instructors provide expectations or a rubric outlining participants' contributions to a group.
- Instructor regularly monitors the groups and provides feedback.

Peer Review
- Instructors assign students to peer review groups to evaluate and give feedback, observations, and suggestions on peers' assignments or projects.

Student-to-Student Q & A
- Instructors provides a peer-discussion forum, cyber lounge/ cafe, or threaded discussion that is not graded. In these forums, students can share their learning, such as concepts they learned well and concepts that they find difficult to understand.
- Instructor monitors the forum regularly.

Third Party Tools for Student-to-Student Interaction
- When third party tools are used for student-to-student contact, instructors should use the LMS to document the interaction.