Regular Effective Contact

Title 5 regulations do not make a distinction between face-to-face and distance education courses beyond the need to have a separate curriculum approval process and the need to ensure regular effective contact. *DE Courses are considered the "virtual equivalent" of face-to-face courses.* Therefore, the frequency of contact will be at least the same as it would be in an equivalent face-to-face course. In addition, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) requires that Distance Education courses ensure that there is "regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor."

As per Title V, section 55211(a), all distance learning courses, whether hybrid, fully online, or telecourse, will include "regular effective contact" which Ventura Community College Distance Education defines as follows:

1. Initiated interaction -

Instructors will regularly initiate interaction with students to determine whether they are accessing, comprehending, and participating in course activities. At the very least, the number of instructor initiated contact hours per week available for face-to-face students will also be available in asynchronous and/or synchronous mode with students in the DE format. *The Ventura College Distance Education Committee has approved a standard of instructors establishing a minimum of 1 hour of synchronous interaction per week in addition to regularly scheduled office hours.*

The following list is intended to be a guide for instructors to ensure that their online courses fulfill the requirements for regular effective contact.

Student-Initiated Contact:

Asynchronous Communication: When contacted via voicemail or e-mail by a student, the instructor responds in a timely manner clearly outlined in the class syllabus, so the contact with the student is reasonably prompt, albeit not instantaneous. This contact is effective because it responds to specific concerns and questions of individual students.

Moderating a Discussion Forum: When a student posts a message in an open, public space in an online class the instructor responds in a timely manner clearly outlined in the class syllabus, so the contact is reasonably prompt, albeit not instantaneous. This contact is effective because it responds to specific concerns and questions of individual students, yet the responses are shared in a public arena, so all students can benefit from the question of one student.

Synchronous Office Hours: Faculty must include in their syllabi a specific hour(s) of specific days when a student can interact with an instructor. These can be physical synchronous office hours where the instructor is present on campus in a specific office. These synchronous office hours can also be times when the instructor is available via various technologies, including but not limited to telephone, e-mail,

audio conferencing (i.e., CCCConfer), video conferencing, and chat rooms. This contact is effective because it responds to specific concerns and questions of individual students.

Instructor-Initiated Contact:

Announcements: These are posts that update students on the content or the processes of the class. They can be in written, audio, or video format. This type of contact is effective because it demonstrates that the instructor is present in the class and is moderating the progress of individual students and the class as a whole. This type of contact is regular – at a minimum, these announcements will happen at least once a week.

Individual Contact with Students via e-mail or phone: This type of contact is effective because it provides an opportunity for one-on-one interaction between student and instructor

Leading Threaded Discussions: Leading a threaded discussion is initiated by the instructor and more directly moderated, directing the messages in the threads toward specific learning objectives. This kind of interaction is effective because it directly links the subject matter of the class with the individual students in the class. Usually there are time limits to these discussions so the responses should be timely and regular within those time constraints as identified by the individual instructor.

Feedback on Student Work: Instructors are responsible for verifying the participation of students and giving them feedback on their performance on assignments. This type of contact is effective and substantive because it provides opportunities for students to adjust their performance and their understanding (or misunderstanding) of the material. Guidelines for grading/feedback on assignment should be stated in the syllabi and best practices suggests a response time for assignments of no more than a week.

Posting Prepared Instructional Material: These materials, combined with publisher-produced material or material found on the Internet, create the functional equivalent of the content of the class. The timing of posting these materials depends on the schedule of the course and should be regular within the parameters of the rhythm of the course. This is also a mode of effective contact between the instructor and the student.

Student-to-Student Contact:

Facilitating Student to Student Contact: Instructors may facilitate conversations between students. This contact can be synchronous or asynchronous. This type of communication is very effective in providing opportunities for collaborative learning among students

Examples (but not limited to) of tools that may be used to implement regular effective contact.

> Course Announcements (e.g., videos, weekly summary, weekly review)
> Personalized Feedback
> Discussion Boards (e.g., question and answer forums, VoiceThread)
> Videoconferencing (e.g., Skype, CCC Confer)
> Collaborative Projects (e.g., group blogs, group discussions, wikis)

Instructor-Created Modules
Lectures (e.g., recorded, streaming, slides with audio narration)
Podcasts
Webinars
Screencasts
Virtual Office Hours
Email
Private Messaging
Chat

2. Frequency –

Contact shall be distributed in a manner that ensures that regular contact is maintained over the course of a week and should occur as often as appropriate for the course. *The Ventura College Distance Education Committee has approved a standard of instructors logging into each course a minimum of 3 times per week.*

3. Expectations -

The instructor's specific policies regarding the frequency and timeliness of instructor initiated contact and feedback will be part of the syllabus or other course documents made available to students at the start of the course.

4. Instructor absences -

If an illness, family emergency, or other unexpected reason prevents the instructor from continuing regular contact, the instructor or will inform students and their department when regular contact is likely to resume.

5. Timely contact -

Online instructors are responsible to respond to students in a timely fashion. *The Ventura College Distance Education Committee has approved a standard of instructors generally responding to students emails within 24 hours of an established 5 day work week.*