Administrative Procedure
Chapter 4 – Academic Affairs

AP 4105   DISTANCE EDUCATION

References:

Education Code Sections 66700 and 70901 et seq.;
Title 5 Section 55005
Title 5 Sections 55200 et seq.;
Title 5 Sections 55260 et seq.;
34 Code of Federal Regulations Part 600.2 and 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, as amended);
ACCJC Accreditation Standard II.A.1

NOTE: *The following procedure is **legally required** if the District has implemented distance education courses. Local practice may be inserted, but it must include the following minimum requirements contained in Title 5.*

Definitions:
Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by time or distance and interact through the assistance of technology as defined in Title 5 section 55200.

Course Approval:
Each proposed or existing course offered by distance education shall be reviewed and approved ~~separately~~ by the Curriculum Committee pursuant to Title 5 section 55206. ~~Separate~~ Curriculum approval is mandatory if any portion of the instruction in a course or a course section is designed to be provided through distance education.

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

Certification:
When approving a distance education course~~s~~, the Curriculum Committee will certify that the course outline of record meets the following standards:

1. **Course Quality Standards:** The same standards of course quality are applied to the distance education courses as are applied to in-person classes. The course outline of record must address the following:

   - How course outcomes will be achieved in a distance education course;
   - How the portion of instruction delivered via distance education provides regular and substantive contact between instructors and students;
   - How the portion of instruction delivered via distance education meets the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

2. **Course Quality Determinations:** Determinations and judgments about the quality of the distance ~~and correspondence~~ education course are in accordance with all Curriculum Committee standards and procedures.

3. **Instructor Contact:** Each section of the course that is delivered through distance education will include regular ~~effective contact~~ and substantive interaction between the instructor(s) and students, (and among students if described in the course outline of record or distance education addendum), 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, email, or other activities. ~~By proposing a distance education course, the faculty author and department agree that the quality and frequency of instructor-initiated contact with the student is equivalent to a face-to-face course. Instructors will use a variety of means to initiate contact with students, such as:~~
   - ~~Threaded discussion forums~~
   - ~~"Questions for the instructor" forums~~
   - ~~General email~~
   - ~~Weekly announcements~~
   - ~~Timely and frequent feedback for student work~~

   "Substantive interaction" means engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:
   - Providing direct instruction;
   - Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
   - Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
   - Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
   - Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

   Regular interaction between a student and instructor(s) is ensured by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency:

- Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
- 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.

Regular and substantive interaction is an academic and professional matter pursuant to Title 5 section 53200 et seq.

Duration of Approval:

All distance and correspondence education courses approved under this procedure will continue to be in effect unless there are substantive changes of the course outline.

NOTE: *The following procedural language is **legally required** in an effort to show good faith compliance with the applicable Federal Regulations if the District offers distance education or correspondence education. The Federal Regulations require districts to have processes in place to ensure that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives academic credit. A district will meet this requirement if it follows the language below. Note that the Federal Regulations do not require districts to charge students fees associated with the verification of the student's identify. However, any district that does charge a fee, must notify the student in writing of the estimated amount of those fees in addition to a statement of the processes used to protect the student's privacy.*

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 or correspondence education courses 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 and estimated additional student charges associated with verification of student identity, if any.

The Chief Instructional Officer shall utilize one or more of these methods to authenticate or verify the student's identity:

NOTE: *Insert local practice here: the following approaches are specifically referenced in the federal regulation as appropriate. The key is to utilize an accepted procedure for verifying a student's identity.*

- secure credentialing/login and password;
- proctored examinations; or

- new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

The Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Academic Affairs shall ensure that at a minimum the college uses secure sign-on and passwords for its online learning management system and requires student identification for proctored examinations. AP 3720 lays out appropriate computer and network use.

The Chief Instructional Officer will ensure that the institution establishes procedures for providing a statement of the process in place to protect student privacy and estimated additional student charges associated with verification of student identity, if any, to each student at the time of registration.

Publication of Course Standards:
For each course offered in a distance education format, the District shall make available to students through college publications all of the following facts before they enroll in the course:
- All required online and in-person synchronous meeting days/dates and times;
- Any required asynchronous in-person activities;
- Any required technology platforms, devices, and applications;
- Any test or assessment proctoring requirements.

NOTE: *Additional language carried over from the college's existing procedure*

Student Services:
The ~~Chief Instructional Officer~~ Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Academic Affairs will ensure that distance learners have access to student support services that are comparable to those services provided to on-campus learners.

~~ADA~~ Accessibility Compliance:
All distance education is subject to the requirements of Title 5 as well the requirements imposed by the American with Disabilities Act (42 U.S. Code Sections 12100 et seq.) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S. Code Section 794d).

As defined in Title 5 section 55200(c), "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.

*April 2015, April 2017, October 2019, and October 2021. The language in **blue ink** is included for consideration. The language in <mark>yellow highlighting</mark> is included to draw the reviewers' attention, and this language will be removed upon final approval.*

Approved: 5/19/15